

ReZero Extra: Fortune Roll Rhapsody

Speaker Color Code: Rigel, Subaru, Rem

When Rigel sees what awaits him in the living room, he suddenly wants nothing more than to turn and run. Deep in his soul, there burns an intense desire to abandon everything and run home. Unfortunately, this *is* his home. There is simply no running from his cruel destiny.

“Fugafuga?”

“.....”

“Fugafugafuu---ga, fuu---gafuga”

“Shut it with your fugafuga’s! What crazy cult ritual is it this time! Do you ever think how your son feels? When he comes home, and his Dad is running around fugafuga-ing with a *pole* of all things stuffed in his mouth!?”

As Subaru stands and ambles toward Rigel, mouth still stuffed, Rigel rants, spit flying everywhere. As the target of his son’s rebellious tantrum, Subaru slinks his shoulders.

“Fugafuga....”

“Would you quit it with the fugafuga’s already!”

“Fugafu.... Geez, what a brat. You know, if you’re always this uptight, you’ll eventually regret it. Kids need to play while they’re young. Once you’re an adult, you’ll worry about people’s opinions and start restraining yourself....”

“When *you* say that, it sounds completely unconvincing! How old are you! How much longer are you gonna keep playing! When will you gain this so-called ability to ‘worry about people’s opinions!’”

Despite approaching his thirties, Natsuki Subaru doesn’t show any sign of slowing down. He even plays with kids Rigel’s age, causing the comparatively mature Rigel intense embarrassment. This boy wishes more than anything for his father to act his age. Then again, if he actually did, Rigel would worry that his father was gravely ill.

“So, what sort of weird festival did you come up with this time?”

“Hold on, my son. Are you actually an esper? So, you’ve somehow gained the ability to *read my mind*. If not, then how could you ever see my actions as part of a festival....”

“It’s more like I’m *praying* it’s for a festival. My sanity couldn’t take it if you casually welcomed me home with a thick pole shoved in your mouth for *no reason*. Just tell me what’s all this about...”

Rife with complaints, Rigel picks up the mysterious object Subaru was carrying in his mouth. He finds it surprisingly soft and flexible. Rigel quickly uncovers its identity.

“....a sushi roll?”

“Yup, a sushi roll. You look like you want one. I got it, if you want it so badly, go ahead and chow down. Luckily, that’s just one of the ‘prototypes.’ I’ve already set aside the rolls for the main event, so you can have that one as a snack.”

“Even if I was hungry, I’m not gonna eat something that spent any time in my Dad’s mouth.... Maybe if it was Mom or Spica.”

“Hey, isn’t eight years old a bit early to hate on your old man this hard? At your age, even *I* respected my Dad.... wait, did I? *Did I?*”

“How would I even know! Anyway, what’s this festival already! And what *main event!*”

Hounded by an impatient Rigel, Subaru shrugs his shoulders and laughs. He points out a plate on the living room table with homemade sushi rolls stacked neatly on top.

“Isn’t it obvious? After the Bean Tossing Festival, ----*YES*, it’s the Ehomaki Challenge!”

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“Ehomaki, is it? What kind of festival would that be?”

Rem, after coming home from shopping, listens to Subaru’s explanation. She tilts her head curiously as she cradles a drowsy Spica in her arms. As Rem speaks, Spica’s small hands lightly grasp at the fair maiden’s long blue hair.

With all members accounted for, the Natsuki household sits in the living room, surrounding the plate of rolls.

“Remember the Bean Tossing Festival? By tossing beans, we took in happiness while getting rid of misfortune.”

“Of course. Rem thought Subaru-kun was trying to throw her away.... Rem’s maiden heart was deeply, *strongly* afflicted. This incredible sadness, it will not heal easily. Please take Rem on a date.”

With upturned eyes, Rem pretends to sulk as Subaru smiles wryly.

His cute wife’s request. As her husband, accepting is both his natural-born duty and his happiest privilege.

“It’ll be my pleasure. Let’s see, I’m free tomorrow, so let’s do it then. Speaking of which, they just finished remodeling the spirit shrine at the edge of town. It’s really something now.”

“Yes. And after Subaru-kun started embossing couples’ vows onto its walls, visitors started flocking to the shrine from all over.

With her husband's work going so well, Rem can hold her head high."

"We're married already, but how about we go add our vows too. It'll be just the two of us. Ah, don't worry, Spica'll be fine. She's got her siscon-afflicted brother to watch over her."

"Subaru-kun.... Rem is so happy. Rem will look forward to tomorrow's date."

"Can we get back to the main topic already!?"

As his parents plan out their date, an impatient Rigel finally explodes. But despite his sudden outburst, Subaru and Rem, used to his tantrums, hardly react at all. Even Spica seems unfazed, her sleepy face unchanging. Rigel's yells echo pointlessly throughout the house.

"Hey Rigel, don't shout so suddenly like that. You know, if you're too hot-blooded while you're young, once you're older, the veins in your head might explode from stress."

"Shaddup! They'll explode even if I hold it in! So I might as well shout!"

"Rigel, what sort of language are you using against your father. Your mother hopes you don't speak like this outside as well. If Rigel always act so angry, everyone from friends to strangers will avoid you. You need to become a more wonderful person like

your father. Oh, but Rigel could never *possibly* hope to win against Subaru-kun. Try not to be too depressed about it.”

“Your *comforting* is depressing me! What did I ever do to you!”

Bullied by his own parents, Rigel throws himself at the floor and collapses into a heap. Subaru and Rem giggle as Rigel falls into complete sulking mode. As Rem readjusts a sleeping Spica in her arms, Subaru clears his throat to resume,

“Well anyway, with it being Rigel’s dying wish and all, let’s get back to the Ehomaki. For the Bean Tossing Festival, we invited happiness and chased out misfortune. This Ehomaki Challenge and the Bean Tossing Festival are both part of a holiday called ‘Setsubun.’ The Ehomaki Challenge is a more minor event though.”

“A different event from the same holiday?”

“Exactly. Back home, the East and West did things totally differently, you see. The Bean Tossing Festival and the Ehomaki Challenge were part of those differences. The East celebrated the Bean Tossing Festival while the West did the Ehomaki Challenge. But there’s no such thing as too much of a good thing, so I thought we’d try both.”

“Yes, as expected of Subaru-kun. The way Subaru-kun unhesitantly takes the best of everything is wonderful as well.”

Rem praises Subaru, clapping softly to avoid waking Spica. Then, putting a finger to her cheek as she tilts her head to the side,

“So if we needed beans for the Bean Tossing Festival, the Ehomaki Challenge uses these sushi rolls?”

“Well, we actually could’ve used a few more things for the Bean Tossing Festival. I already got that shop to stock more beans for next year. But I also want to make some more elaborate preparations like getting an Oni mask and Oni pants for me to wear.”

When it came to enjoying festivals to their fullest, Natsuki Subaru’s energy and dynamism knew no limits. A spellbound Rem gazes fondly as her husband exhibits his needlessly hot passion. After briefly letting his thoughts run wild, he shakes his head.

“Nononono. We’re talking about Ehomaki right now. Just as Rem says, instead of beans, we have these sushi rolls. Where I call from, this kind of sushi roll is called an ‘Ehomaki.’ Rem, just from looking, what do you notice?”

“Hm, well. It’s very long and thick and black.”

“One more time please.”

“----? It seems to be very long and thick and black.”

“My cute, honest wife can sometimes be unknowingly erotic....”

Deeply moved, Subaru struggles to keep a straight face as Rem returns an innocent, puzzled look.

Seeing as this wasn't particularly wholesome education, Subaru puts on a serious face and gets back to the sushi rolls.

“These thick sushi rolls are called ‘Taimaki.’ Unfortunately, Kararagi doesn't have any customs about Ehomaki, so I made them myself. They're actually pretty easy.”

“This faintly sour scent, this is vinegie, yes?”

“Vinegared rice. It's definitely the ideal rice for sushi. Next time, we should try it with some raw fish. Putting that aside for now, the recipe's really simple. You just take dried seaweed and vinegared rice and wrap seven different fillings inside. That's it!”

“Is there any special meaning attached to having seven fillings?”

Peering at the Ehomaki's rainbow-colored fillings, Rem asks a natural question.

“Glad you noticed, as expected of my wife! Yeah, that's an important point. Ehomaki are meant to be a festive food. Back home, we held festivals every year to celebrate the Seven Deities of Fortune, you see.”

“My, such festive deities.”

“Yeah, they’re a real festive bunch. The seven different fillings represent the Seven Deities, and when we wrap them into Ehomaki, it’s like we’re capturing their luck. A food filled to the brim with good luck. That’s Ehomaki!”

As Subaru explains this last point, his foot dramatically planted on the table, Rem once again claps modestly.

Finished listening, Rigel raises his face. With delinquent's eyes that rival Subaru’s in sharpness, Rigel glares at his festive parents.

“So after all that fanfare, we’re just gonna eat sushi rolls? I don’t see what the big deal is....”

“Foolishly foolish fool!”

“Yeow! How’s a finger-flick so strong!?”

After chastising his cheeky son with a whip-like finger flick to the forehead, Subaru grabs the agony-stricken Rigel and forcibly gives him a shoulder ride.

“Why are you suddenly carrying me!?”

“Just felt like it, really. Anyway, I’ll admit that compared to the Bean Tossing Festival, the Ehomaki Challenge seems a bit plain. But actually, I neglected to mention a few more points. Forgive me my son.”

“Don’t bow while I’m on your shoulders! Cut it out! I’m falling!”

With the flailing Rigel’s very life at his mercy, Subaru makes purposefully dizzying laps around the dining table. As father and son engage in such lighthearted roughhousing, Rem looks on with an affectionate, motherly gaze.

“So then, what else is left to explain, Subaru-kun?”

“Well first of all, what do you think the ‘Eho’ of ‘Ehomaki’ means? I haven’t explained that yet, afterall. The way it’s written, ‘Eho’ means ‘the compass of fortune.’ Every year, we have a lucky direction, like north or south. So they’re called ‘Ehomaki’ because we face that direction while we eat them.”

“Rem sees now. A ‘compass of fortune,’ what a fun idea.”

“Also, you can’t speak while you eat an Ehomaki. It’s just a saying though, so don’t split hairs over it. They also say you should eat it with a smile but.... actually, that sounds like a good one. They do say ‘Fortune comes to those who smile.’ Besides, you naturally smile while eating something good.”

As Subaru grins widely at his own explanation, Rem cheerfully adds,

“When Subaru-kun eats the food Rem makes, Subaru-kun always has such a big smile.”

“Delicious food and a cute wife. Spending time at home with my beloved family, how could I *not* smile? It’s like I’m hogging the entire world’s happiness for myself.”

“With Rem, it would be two people hogging.... actually, the whole family is hogging the world’s happiness.”

“Rem....”

“Subaru-kun....”

“Don’t flirt around with people riding on your head! Mom too! Restrain yourself a little while holding Spica!”

As Subaru and Rem flirt, totally oblivious of their children, Rigel’s impatience boils over and explodes.

In the Natsuki household, conversations tend to sidetrack and go nowhere fast. Almost like another festival, it’s a regular event that simply can’t be helped.

After Subaru finally puts Rigel down, Rem hands Spica over to her son. An astonished Rigel watches as his parents lovingly take a seat beside each other.

Tightly holding Subaru’s hand, Rem lets her small body rest against his shoulder.

“By the way, if the Ehomaki.... If it’s the ‘compass of fortune,’ which direction should it point in this year? Does Subaru-kun know?”

“Nah, I honestly have no clue. Even now, I wonder how they figured it out every year. It might’ve had something to do with Feng Shui, but that’s way beyond what I know.”

Leveraging his knowledge from before being summoned, Subaru makes a living as a successful producer of sorts. Though he can take a smattering of knowledge and somehow stretch it thin, he can’t do anything when completely clueless.

While Subaru prepared the Ehomaki successfully, the all-important “lucky direction” eludes him. Tilting his head in puzzlement, his eyes wander toward Rigel and Spica. Suddenly, an idea forms in Subaru’s head, and he claps his hands together.

“I got it. This year’s lucky direction, we’ll let Spica decide it.”

“Huh? Let *Spica* decide? Think a little before you speak. Spica’s still small and cute, and you already want to corrupt her? God, it’s just too pitiful. Hey you, are you going to take responsibility for Spica’s tarnished future, *HUH?*”

“Man, whenever the conversation turns to Spica, you act like the world’s most obnoxious delinquent.”

With Rigel violently opposing his father’s idea, Subaru thinks of how to pacify him.

“Listen. What would you say is the clearest symbol of happiness in our home? Of course, Rem’s very existence is happiness itself, and your natural-born talent as a verbal punching bag is like a blessing granted to me by God, a fateful meeting of fortune and destiny....”

“Waitwaitwaitwait, I just heard something I can’t ignore, *HEY!*”

“Rigel, please calm down. Just as Rem is a symbol of happiness to Subaru-kun, Subaru-kun is a symbol of happiness to Rem. Your mother doesn’t have any sort of misunderstanding about that, so please don’t worry.”

“Anyone with eyes would know not to worry over that!”

Rigel plugs Spica’s ears as he shouts at his parents, his so-called *secret technique*. Born and raised in the Natsuki household, in Rigel’s short lifetime of a mere eight years, much like a one-trick pony, he developed potential in but a single talent.

----Yes, his natural ‘straight man’ act and his prodigious ‘victim’ character.

“Doesn’t that make him a two-trick pony?”

“What kind of monologue are you having! Get back to the topic!!”

“Well what I mean is, Spica is the clearest symbol of happiness we have. That’s why, whichever direction Spica chooses will definitely be lucky. How’s that?”

“Shit, compared to Dad’s usual nonsense, that’s a pretty flawless, watertight argument....tch!”

“Whenever Spica gets involved, you completely lose your sense of judgement, don’t you.”

Frustrated, Rigel ruffles his short blue hair. But with his eventual approval, the specifics of the Ehomaki Challenge were finalized. Since Subaru prepared the sushi rolls in advance, the last task was to divine the lucky direction.

“Having Spica decide seems fine, but how should we go about it? Spica probably won’t understand anything we tell her.”

“Hmm, let’s see.... How about we let Spica sleep on the table, and when she wakes up, we’ll go with the first direction she looks.”

“When she wakes up,”

“First direction she looks....”

Considering Subaru’s impassioned speech from before, it was a rather casual way of deciding. Rem and Rigel look at each other, then down at Spica. They seem to be mulling over something.

“In other words, we decide based on.... who Spica loves the most. ----is what Subaru-kun means, yes?”

“....I, I guess?”

Rem’s overthinking startles Subaru, but he realizes she’s not exactly wrong. The first person Spica lays eyes on, ----in other words, the person this defenseless baby depends on most. Unexpectedly, the lucky direction will be decided in a battle for Spica’s love!

“Well, unfortunately for you two, it’s *obviously* going to be me. I’m the breadwinner of this household afterall. Spica must realize it’s thanks to her amazing Dad that she enjoys the necessities of life. Even though she’s still a baby, I’m sure this clever child is already dreaming of becoming my wife someday.”

“Please wait a moment. While Rem does indeed plan to teach Spica about Subaru-kun’s greatness and splendidness, this and that are two different matters. Afterall, from whom does Spica receive her milk, and in whose breasts does she so peacefully rest? This child surely knows. Rem is clearly the winner here.”

“You two just butt out. I’m obviously the one Spica relies on the most. In this weird, unreasonable household, I’ve abandoned anything and everything to protect her. Spica, loves, me, most, definitely.”

A three-way standoff, with no one yielding Spica’s love.

They stare each other down fiercely, daggers in their eyes as they compete for her. The peaceful mood from before feels like a lie.

“----ooh--”

As sparks fly, Spica rouses in Rigel’s arms. With the baby about to wake up at any second, the trio look each other in the eyes,

“Ehomaki moved!”

“Pillow set!”

“Spica set!”

Subaru takes the Ehomaki off the table, Rem places a cushion onto it, and Rigel plops Spica onto the cushion.

From there, the three nod, splitting off in different directions. On top of the cushion, Spica rouses from her slumber, her head shaking gently, her small hands rubbing at her eyes. So cute. Like an angel.

“-----”

Holding their breath, they wait to see who Spica turns to. Eventually, her eyes pop open, and her light blue eyes dart around the room.

“Aah----”

“OH YEAAAAAAHH!!”

Seeing Spica extend her hand out to him, a victorious Rigel falls to his knees in dramatic cheer.

The chosen Rigel yells with pure joy. Meanwhile, the forgotten Subaru and Rem fail to hide their disappointment as they snuggle up to each other,

“Well, when you think about it, the person who rests most peacefully in your breasts is *me*. I guess this match was over before it started.”

“Even if Spica wanted to be Subaru-kun’s wife, that spot is already Rem’s territory, and she will never budge an inch from it. It was an expected result.”

“Would you guys just celebrate my victory! Don’t get all mushy in front of your damn kids!”

Rigel scolds his parents as Spica mischievously pulls on his face. Seeing his usual attitude, his parents burst into laughter. Eventually, Subaru takes note of where Rigel stood,

“Looks like Rigel was in front of the entranceway. Alright, that’s our lucky direction. Everyone, take your Ehomaki and let’s go.”

“Yes, Subaru-kun. But which Ehomaki is Rem’s? Did Subaru-kun prepare one especially for her?”

“This one’s yours, Rem. I made it with a sakura filling that forms a heart shape when it’s rolled up. I went through a lot to pull it off, and I had to eat the failures, so I’m already *stuffed*.”

Subaru’s belly appears noticeably rounder than usual. Rem extends her hand toward it and rubs it lovingly.

“Subaru-kun looks so wonderful when he does his best for Rem.”

“Alright alright, to the entranceway damnit, the entranceway. As for mine, I’ll just take whatever. Also, what are we doing about Spica’s? She barely even has her baby teeth. It’ll be no joke if she chokes on the seaweed or something. Did you even think about that?”

Rigel searches for a roll that the young Spica could possibly eat. However, the overprotective brother fails to find anything. To Subaru as well, being unable to prepare anything for her was a major regret.

“I tried a lot of things like melting the seaweed, but the tests didn’t go too well. It’s unfortunate, but Rigel will just have to eat twice as much to satisfy the Seven Deities.”

“How the hell am I supposed to eat *two* of these gigantic things. You’re expecting way too much from me.”

“Oh, I see. Yeah, I get it now. I guess even with Spica’s happiness on the line, you’re the kind of brother who can’t even

make the effort to push his stomach a *tiny* little bit. That's okay, I'll do my best. You just keep **deceiving** Spica with your shallow, superficial love....”

“I get it! I'll eat them both! No, *please* let me eat them both!”

“Hey, don't pop out your horn over something like this....”

After taunting him with Spica, a short horn protrudes from Rigel's forehead. He quickly grabs two futomaki and makes for the entranceway. Subaru and Rem laugh heartily as they follow after him.

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“-----”

“-----”

“-----”

“Aahh---”

Silence dominates the entranceway.

While many rules about Ehomaki exist, the most popular, widespread rule is undeniably “one may not speak while eating Ehomaki.”

Since Ehomaki is eaten to take in fortune, opening your mouth would be like letting that fortune escape, ---is probably the case, Subaru decides.

To that end, the trio sit in their entranceway, nomming at their Ehomaki while staring blankly at the front door. Determined to finish their rolls, they eat in complete silence.

“Knock knock. Pardon Natsuki-san, I’m comin’ in.”

While they sit in the entranceway, their front door suddenly opens. Perhaps due to old Kararagi customs, since long ago, this rural town had a culture of being shockingly laidback and neighborly. Almost no one locks their doors, and people would suddenly come inside to greet each other like it was perfectly natural. The voice from just now belongs to a middle-aged woman, one of their many neighbors.

“We’re passin’ around this week’s neighborhood notice. Was hopin’ you could take a look....”

says the woman, flyers in hand. But upon seeing the entire household sitting in their entranceway, nibbling at taimaki while silently staring at her, the woman’s eyes grow wide like saucers. But, quickly nodding, she leaves the flyers on their shoe cabinet.

“Well, looks like ya’ll are busy, so maybe later. Take a look and pass it on will ya? Oh my---, Spica’s such a cutie today.”

Smiling at a waving Spica, the woman leaves with a brief “toodle-oo.” They wordlessly see her off with nods and hand waves. Once gone, the four return to sitting in complete silence----

“What the hell was that scene!!”

Unable to bear it any longer, Rigel suddenly jolts up, shouting against the absurdity.

“Why did our neighbor accept it like it was totally natural! Do the neighbors just assume we’re a bunch of nutcases! I feel like an idiot for freaking out over Dad’s shenanigans! Am I the weird one here!?”

“Fuga. Calm down Rigel. I know how you’re feeling right now. Sometimes, when something feels off, you wonder if the problem is with you or the world itself. But you know, it’s almost always the case that you left home with right shoe on left foot or something....”

*“No! You’re wrong! I’m not a nutcase! It’s the *world* that’s gone mad!”*

As Rigel raves on, a giggling Spica excitedly claps her hands together. To Spica, the sight of her brother writhing in frustration is her greatest plaything. To already recognize the best way to enjoy Rigel at such a young age, this girl’s future feels extraordinarily bright.

“Also, because you started talking, I failed the Ehomaki Challenge too. Damn, I really want to succeed at least once. There’s plenty of rolls left, but at this rate.”

“That’s weird too! You said I only had to eat two of them, but now you and I have to finish off them all off *ourselves*? What about Mom?”

“You idiot, we can’t let Rem force herself like that. What are you going to do if these carb-heavy bombs of rice and sugar destroy Rem’s figure!? Even after having two kids, the fact that she’s as slim as ever is a bonafide *miracle*. Compared to her, our weights are just mere numbers.”

“Nomnom.... Rem is finished. Also, if Subaru-kun says it like that, Rem will get shy.”

With a flushed, embarrassed-looking face, Rem declares her completion. With her serious, goal-oriented attitude, Rem’s chances of clearing the Ehomaki Challenge were exceedingly high. On the other hand, with their whimsical, impatient natures, Subaru and Rigel fail over and over.

Finally, one massive roll and one smaller roll remain.

“These Ehomaki are our very last chance. After all that squabbling and prep work, we can’t let it all go to waste. Let’s do our best, Rigel.”

“Urp.... I’m almost at my limit. I’ll remember this, shitty Dad.... ugh.”

“**Good Luck**”

Subaru gives a thumbs up as Rigel faces off against the smaller Ehomaki. Rem, having finished long ago, snuggles up to Subaru,

“By the way, this event doesn’t seem to involve Oni. Rem has *many* objections to the Oni abuse in the Bean Tossing Festival, but not involving them feels somewhat lonely.”

“Hmm, they don’t have to be completely uninvolved, do they? The seven fillings represent the Seven Deities, but you could also say they’re like sealed Oni. Maybe the red filling could be the Red Oni, and the blue filling could be the Blue Oni.”

“Do the Ehomaki even have a blue filling....?”

“Well, you know, sometimes vegetables are called ‘blue-green’ and.... is that too much of a stretch?”

Hearing about the Blue Oni and thinking it was her, Rem wears a somewhat dissatisfied face. Then again, with nothing blue to use as filling, it simply couldn’t be helped.

Smiling wryly at Rem’s scornful eyes, Subaru spins the last Ehomaki in his hands.

“But if we think of the fillings as Oni instead of deities, it’d be like exterminating the Oni by eating them. I guess even here, the Oni get antagonized.”

“Does Subaru-kun’s hometown hold some sort of grudge against Oni?”

“Well a bunch of stories talk about rampaging Oni and such. But it’s not like I feel that way. The story about the Red and Blue Oni is my all-time favorite. And of course, my wife is an Oni too. So it’s the same deal as the Bean Tossing Festival.”

“The same deal?”

Rem asks with a curious look on her face.

“Yeah, the same deal. For me, ‘eating the Oni’ is the same as taking in happiness. If anything, they’d become my flesh and blood, in a sort of ‘I won’t let you go’ way.”

“Will Rem be caught?”

“I’ll catch you for sure.”

While Rem’s face beams with happiness, Subaru’s looks explicitly lewd. To their side, Rigel ignores them as he finishes his Ehomaki in silence.

“Alright, I ate it! I ate it all, damnnit! Hey, did you guys see that?”

“Deepest apologies.”

“Don’t apologize so honestly! Damnnit, I already knew, I was watching while I ate!”

Sulking, Rigel picks up Spica and rubs cheeks with her. Seeing her brother so heartbroken, Spica pats his back as if comforting him.

“Well then, for the finale, the family head will show what he’s got.”

“Yes. Rem looks forward to seeing Subaru-kun’s cool side.”

With Rem cheering him on, Subaru challenges the final sushi roll, a true monstrosity, ----Ehomaki **GRANDE!**

Subaru had slapped together all the remaining ingredients into this last roll. While it technically still had seven different fillings, frankly speaking, it was less an Ehomaki and more like a biological weapon.

“No---mm”

Practically unhinging his jaw, Subaru bites into the Ehomaki, taking the first blow in their epic battle.

Having already failed numerous times, Subaru’s stomach is dangerously close to its limit. It could burst apart at any moment, a truly cruel and miserable death. Even then, as a man, as a father, there comes a time when one must fight.

“Nom-”

“-----!?”

While Subaru takes on the battle of his life, Rem circles around to assist him.

Smiling slightly, she noms at the opposite side of the Ehomaki. In accordance with the rules, Subaru has no way to stop her. Rem had anticipated this, intent on waging war against the final Ehomaki right alongside him.

With his wife's support, Subaru felt the strength of ten thousand allies pushing him on. But even while borrowing Rem's power, as a man, Subaru has to show her his own strength. He pushes himself to lighten her burden by eating even just a tiny bit more. As Subaru and Rem press on, the Ehomaki between them grows shorter and shorter. Before long, their faces close in, then finally their lips----

“Hold it! BAAAM!!”

At the very last second, Rigel splits the sushi roll with a karate chop.

With his horn protruding, Oni powers massively amplify the sharpness of Rigel's chop. It wields more than enough strength to cleanly cut into the Ehomaki's rice and seaweed.

With the sushi roll suddenly split in two, Subaru and Rem part their startled faces. Quickly finishing off their ends of the roll, they confront their son.

“Hey, Rigel! We were about to have a beautiful finale right there!”

“That’s right, Rigel. Subaru-kun and Rem were working on a very important collaborative effort. Does Rigel have some sort of complaint about his mother and father getting along?”

“Hell yeah I do! You’re always ‘getting along’ *waay* more than necessary! And I’m always trying to tell you too! Get across, *my feelings!*”

“Sorry, ***Deflected!***”

“Don’t deflect them!”

As if swatting away Rigel’s projected thoughts, Subaru cheekily slaps at the air. On the other hand, an indignant Rem presses rather forcefully against Rigel’s horn. With a pitiful yelp, he collapses in a heap.

“Karate chopping food, Rem doesn’t remember raising such a bad child. And to not only interrupt, but to interrupt at the *last second*. Rem hardly thinks this is sufficient punishment.”

“I wonder if all the demi-humans have weak points like this. Spica, if your horn grows in, you can’t let anyone but your precious person handle it, alright?”

Retrieving Spica from a collapsed Rigel, Subaru lectures her in his arms. Spica blinks at his words and rubs her forehead. As if to say that even if they did grow, her family would still love her.

“As expected of Spica, our family’s greatest treasure. With a single move, she puts us all in bliss.”

Oddly enough, her simplest actions feel even more effective than the Ehomaki. Subaru kisses Spica’s forehead, then hands her off to Rem. He then slings the agony-stricken Rigel over his shoulder and proceeds to spank him.

“So, after we clean the kitchen, how about we go back to talking about our date?”

“Rem agrees. Also, while there’s still quite some time left, what would Subaru-kun like for dinner?”

“I’ve had my fill. I’m totally *stuffed*.”

With a strained laugh, Subaru heads to the living room. Rem walks alongside him with a heartfelt smile.

-----On this day as well, they enjoy a rather uniquely-shaped happiness.

Today is Setsubun.

A sightly special day that comes every year, once a year.